

HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 16th September, 2024
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Rupert Adcock (Chair)		
Councillors:	Barker MBE Brown Crisp	Dymond Northcott Reece	Richards Whieldon Wilkes
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Wright		
Officers:	Nesta Barker Andrew Bird Michelle Hopper Craig Jordan Roger Tait	Service Director - Regulatory Services Service Director - Sustainable Environment Mobile Multi-Functional Manager Service Director - Planning Service Director - Neighbourhood Delivery	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Gill Heesom Councillor David Hutchison	Portfolio Holder - Community Safety and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder - Sustainable Environment	

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received as listed above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3rd June 2024 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. **STAFFORDSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Resolved: That the report received from Staffordshire County Council Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

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5. WALLEYS QUARRY ODOURS UPDATE

The Service Director for Regulatory Services presented an update on Walleys Quarry Odours as reported to Cabinet on 10th September.

Members submitted questions and responses were provided by the officer.

Cllr Brown enquired about the 28th of August virtual public meeting organised by the Environment Agency and the UK-HSA risk assessment mentioned then. She also wished to know if there were any update on legal action now that permission had been received from the Secretary of State.

– More information and questions arising from the event about the HSA risk assessment and the Environment Agency were to be published on the EA Engage website. The legal action process was continuing as last reported to Cabinet and Council.

Cllr Brown asked if any kind of correlation had been made for days when the levels were steady and no complaints were received.

– Data was collected to try and explain the rise and falls in levels and complaints so that risks can be identified and mitigated going forward.

Cllr Whieldon suggested that the dates where reductions had been noticed seemed to correspond to dates of public enquiry. She also referred to monitoring done by local protest groups and lorries without registration plates coming to the site and leaving without doing a wheel wash meaning the dirt would then be carried onto the roads on long distances.

– Air quality data appears to be consistent with the number of complaints received, i.e. good air quality usually correlated with a low level of complaints. In terms of vehicles going in and out a regulatory regime was indeed in place and the Environment Agency had done some spot checks. Details about specific vehicles could be sent to the officer so that these could be passed on to the relevant enforcing authority.

Cllr Whieldon enquired about the fire incident and expressed concerns about the exercise of freedom of information in relation to the report received.

– There was currently no additional information circulating about the fire. In relation to redactions to Freedom of Information Request, the organisation could restrict information such as relating to individuals which fell under data protection, or some of the legal exemptions for which confidentiality was required.

The Chair asked about the Mobile Monitoring Facilities (MMFs) changes of names and relocations.

– The facilities were now named according to their location and some of them were being transferred. The Silverdale one was supposed to be moved due to construction works being scheduled but these having been delayed the station was now to stay in its current location until a suitable site was found.

Cllr Whieldon wished for assurance that the equipment to measure the emissions were regularly tested.

– The MMFs were operated by the Environment Agency and a process was in place for the calibration of the H2S sensors along with systems and checks to ensure the results were reliable.

Resolved: That the contents of the update report be noted.

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6. **SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Service Director for Sustainable Environment updated the Committee on the Sustainable Environment Strategy as reported to Cabinet on 4th June.

Members submitted questions and responses were provided by the Service Directors for Sustainable Environment and Planning.

Cllr Reece asked about paragraph 3.7 and engaging with businesses.

– From next year onwards businesses would be required to separate general waste from recycling which was so far done with households only. A proper engagement campaign was due in the beginning of the year. The commercial waste service was also to be refreshed. Communicating effectively with businesses and residents was a challenge. A Facebook page had just been launched and was gaining momentum. Thoughts were finally given to designing a system similar to the food hygiene rating starts which had been hugely successful.

Cllr Whieldon enquired about paragraph 3.10 and whether there was any synergy between the work done around the strategy and the handling of planning applications with regards to fossil fuels, solar panels etc.

– Officers were working closely together for individual planning applications as well as at a larger scale with the emerging Local Plan policies to best address issues such as climate change and CO2 emissions. Once adopted the Local Plan would allow to introduce approaches in line with the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

Cllr Richards wondered about community buildings and external funding.

– These applied to the community centres which were assessed back in 2022. Reports had been issued with recommendations for each building.

Cllr Richards expressed concerns about the fact those buildings owned by the Borough Council were mainly run by volunteers and that the recommendations may fall out of their scope of expertise. This may have an impact on the Council's net zero emission target.

– Buildings not operated by the Council were not included when evaluating the Council's carbon emissions.

Resolved: That the update be received.

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7. **NEIGHBOURHOOD DELIVERY TEAM - SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

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The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery presented the report on the Scope and Purpose of the Neighbourhood Delivery Team (formerly known as Mobile Multi-Functional Team), including a guide for members listing relevant officers and services and how to report issues.

Members submitted questions and responses were provided by the officer.

Cllr Barker enquired about issues relating to the County Council's Street Scene services in relation to shop workers. Cllr Wilkes commented that these should be reported to the County Council. Cllr Barker responded that residents and small businesses would tend not to report things through the available channels and reach out to elected members instead.

– There were indeed several channels available for residents to report issues either through the relevant authorities' website or agencies in charge such as Aspire Housing.

Cllr Brown wondered about fly tipping that wasn't picked up on the land that belonged to the Homes England and if rangers could do anything about it.

– Rangers could indeed pick up a couple of bags of rubbish or broken glass with no need to necessarily investigate who was responsible as well as engaging with the landowner to make them aware of the issue.

Cllr Brown asked whether the reduction of staffing two years ago and the organisation as presented in the report were related.

– They were two different things. One part time member of staff had retired since the team was set up however there was no need to replace him as the team was multi-skilled. Eight persons later on joined the new team following the restructuration.

Cllr Reece referred to another case of household waste fly tipping on private land which was reported and on which no progress had been made, asking if any update could be provided.

– The situation had been monitored with small scale tidying up and the landowner had been identified and reminded of their responsibility to look after the piece of land that was concerned.

Cllr Reece asked how many people were on the waiting list for allotments as well as how many plots were currently untended and if any action was being taken.

– There was a large waiting list and plot inspections were taking place around spring and autumn. The plots were made available again following a process.

Cllr Whieldon enquired about the cars parked on grass verges in which a lot of maintenance efforts and money were put in.

– This was mainly an issue of the County Council Highways, the Borough being responsible for off street parking enforcement in the Councils' car parks.

Resolved: That the guide to the scope and purpose of the Neighbourhood Delivery team be received, and its contents noted.

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8. **ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY**

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery presented the report on the draft Animal Welfare Strategy in the view of reiterating the commitment to protecting and promoting animal welfare in the borough.

Members submitted questions and responses were provided by the officer.

Cllr Whieldon wished to lobby for the re-introduction of licenses for dogs.

– The suggestion could be taken to Cabinet.

Cllr Dymond expressed doubts about bringing back the requirement for licenses. Instead it should be ensured that chips are updated when dog owners move house.

– The Charter promoted responsible pet ownership which included updating such chips.

The Chair proposed that the third recommendation be taken forward. Cllr Whieldon seconded the proposal.

- Resolved:**
1. That the draft Animal Welfare Charter be received and comments on its content be provided.
 2. That the draft Animal Welfare Charter be forwarded to Cabinet and subsequently to Full Council, for approval and adoption, subject to any proposed amendments.
 3. That other local authorities be canvassed to collectively write to the UK Government urging a ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on public and private land.

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9. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was discussed.

The Chair reported having visited the Fire Station along with Cllrs Whieldon and Lewis. The Chief Fire Officer offered to come in the New Year to give an update especially on the three-person trial.

Cllr Brown raised the issue of the tennis facilities provisions.

Cllr Reece enquired about the A53 Bus gate. An alternative proposal was being submitted to Cabinet and would be brought to the Committee at a later stage.

Cllr Reece also asked about the Homeless Hub at the International House that was discussed at the Planning Committee the previous week.

The Chair recalled that the issue of allotments had also been brought up.

Cllr Richards wished to discuss the state of different parks in the various wards and some strategy to improve the parks moving forward.

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The Service Director for Sustainable Environment commented this would go under the grassland management strategy.

The suggestions were noted and would be taken into consideration.

Resolved: That the work programme be received.

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10. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions received from members of the public.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: That the next meeting be held on 25th November 2024.

**Councillor Rupert Adcock
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.37 pm